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IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 12 DECEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to inform you of the following:

1. On 5 December 1998 the Iraqi vessel Al-Abed, which was headed towards the port of Mu'aqal in Basrah carrying 1,500 tons of wheat from the port of Umm Qasr to the Umm Qasr silo, was intercepted by boats and a helicopter belonging to the United States forces while in Iraq's territorial waters. Some soldiers boarded and searched the Iraqi vessel while the remainder stayed on board the boats surrounding it.

2. On 6 December 1998, at 12.30, the Iraqi vessel set sail for the Shatt al-Arab, after the United States forces had completed their operation.

The acts committed by the United States forces constitute blatant aggression against Iraq. I therefore request you to intervene to put an end to these unwarranted acts of aggression, which have increased significantly of late. These practices constitute a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law as well as an attack on the sovereignty and security of a State Member of the Organization. I should also like to reaffirm the right of Iraq to seek compensation, in accordance with the principle of international responsibility, for the injury, principally material, suffered by Iraq and the Iraqi people as a result of the aforementioned acts.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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